

PURCHASE OF NEGROES FROM SEMINOLE INDIANS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

IN ANSWER TO

*A Call for Information in relation to the Purchase of Indian Negroes
in the Seminole Country.*

JUNE 6, 1836.

Read, and laid upon the table.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
June 6, 1836.

SIR: In answer to the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 3d instant, I have the honor to state, that the documents relating to the purchase of Indian negroes in the Seminole nation, were transmitted to that body on that day, in answer to the resolution of the 21st instant. I enclose a list of the letters relating to that subject then transmitted.

This Department is not advised that any licenses were granted for this object. None were reported by the late Indian agent; and from the tenor of the correspondence upon this subject, it is reasonable to infer that none were issued by him.

It appears, upon an examination of that correspondence, that General Call was informed, by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, on the 26th of March, 1835, that as there was no legal prohibition to the Seminole Indians selling the slaves owned by them, the Department deemed it unnecessary to interfere in the matter, and give them permission to exercise a right, which seemed already to belong to them.

On the 27th of April, General Thompson communicated to the Department his doubts whether this subject had been fully considered, and stated the reasons which, in his judgment, rendered it inexpedient to permit persons to enter the Seminole country to purchase the negroes of these Indians. These were their unwillingness to part with them—his fear that the negroes, who had great influence with their owners, would endeavor to thwart the emigration, and his assurance to the Indians, that nothing should induce him to sanction these sales.

This letter was submitted to the President, and, on the 22d of May, General Thompson was informed, by his direction, that the views taken in the letter to General Call, above cited, were approved.

On the 14th of June, a reply was received from the agent, reiterating the expression of the opinions stated in his letter of April 27th, (in which Colonel Gadsden and Captain Thruston, of the army, then in this city, concurred), and stating that he should suspend further operations upon the subject, until he again heard from the Department. Upon hearing the representations of these gentlemen, the President, on the 7th of July, directed the letter of July 11th to be written,

The endorsement upon General Thompson's letter of June 14th, is in the following words:

"It is made known to me by Colonel Gadsden and Captain Thruston, now here, that the Indians in Florida have no disposition to sell their negroes, and the very idea that any individuals are permitted to come into their country to buy, have distressed them very much, and all say they will neither sell nor leave their negroes. You will therefore instruct the agent, extracting the above information, to permit no individuals to go into the nation to buy any of their negroes without his written passport, and to inform the chiefs of this order.

" July 7, 1835.

(Signed)

" A. J."

Very respectfully,

Your most obedient servant,

LEW. CASS.

Hon. JAMES K. POLK,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Who from.	Date.	To whom.
Hon. J. M. White	February 24, 1834	Secretary of War.
Gen. Wiley Thompson	September 8, 1835	Acting Secretary of War.
Hon. J. M. White	March 6, 1834	Secretary of War.
Gov. William P. Duval	March 12, 1834	Comm'r Indian Affairs.
Gen. Wiley Thompson	December 2, 1834	" " "
R. L. Gamble	February 28, 1835	Secretary of War.
R. K. Call	March 22, 1835	The President.
Wiley Thompson	March 25, 1835	Comm'r Indian Affairs.
William P. Duval	May 23, 1836	Secretary of War.
Wiley Thompson	June 17, 1835	Acting Secretary of War.
" "	June 14, 1835	" " "
" "	July 19, 1835	Secretary of War.
" "	July 20, 1835	Comm'r Indian Affairs.
" "	September 23, 1835	" " "
J. A. Cameron	April 12, 1836	Secretary of War.
George Walker	April 21, 1836	" "
Wiley Thompson	April 27, 1835	" "